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**Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions**

# Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan

## Report of the Secretary-General

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# I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/1 K of 7 December 1998, entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan". In that resolution, the Assembly, welcoming the progress made towards the implementation of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan (A/52/219-S/1997/510, annex I), and noting that the economic situation in Tajikistan remained bleak, constraining the efforts of the Government to support the vulnerable population, including returning refugees and displaced persons, and that the country remained in dire need of humanitarian, rehabilitation and development assistance, strongly condemned the murder of four members of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT), and urged the parties to ensure the safety, security and freedom of movement of United Nations and other international humanitarian personnel, as well as the safety and security of their premises.

2. The General Assembly also encouraged Member States and others concerned to continue assistance to alleviate the urgent humanitarian needs of Tajikistan and to offer support to Tajikistan for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of its economy; welcomed the intention of the Secretary-General to continue the United Nations humanitarian programme in Tajikistan by issuing a consolidated inter-agency appeal for humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan for 1999, and invited Member States to fund programmes included in the appeal.

3. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to monitor the humanitarian situation in Tajikistan and to report to it at its fifty-fourth session on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution. The present report covers the period from the adoption of the resolution to mid-July 1999. During that period, three reports were submitted to the Security Council on the situation in Tajikistan (S/1998/1029, S/1999/124 and S/1999/514).

# II. Current situation in Tajikistan

4. Although full implementation of the 1997 General Agreement is more than eight months behind schedule, notable progress in the peace process was made in the second quarter of 1999 when a number of outstanding problems were finally resolved. Those breakthroughs followed a tense three-month period, from April to June 1999, when relations between the Government and United Tajik Opposition (UTO) stalemated over failure to reach agreement on constitutional reform, amnesty for former combatants and power-sharing issues. On 17 June, the President of Tajikistan and the leader of the UTO signed a Protocol outlining the concrete steps both parties would take to speed implementation.

5. Despite an overall lessening of tensions, the security situation remains volatile. In late 1998, in accordance with provisions of the General Agreement, several unaffiliated armed groups were disbanded, a development that helped to reduce tensions. In areas where command structures were fragmented, however, armed clashes continued to occur. Political killings, including the September murder of a leading member of the UTO, Otakhon Latifi, also persisted. In October, hostilities erupted in the previously quiet area of Khujand in Leninabad, increasing tensions with neighbouring Uzbekistan, which was accused of serving as the staging ground for the attack. In December 1998, fighting erupted in Dushanbe between rival units, raising concerns about the ability of the Tajik authorities to maintain law and order. The killing of four UNMOT personnel in July 1998 in the Karategin Valley followed by the death of a fifth UNMOT staff member in unclear circumstances in August led to a temporary evacuation of non-essential United Nations personnel and tighter security procedures, including restrictions on travel in the Karategin Valley. Although three gunmen were found guilty in March 1999 of the July UNMOT killings, restrictions on United Nations travel were lifted only in mid-June.

6. The Government has continued its successful implementation of structural economic reforms, resulting in a 5.3 per cent growth rate in 1998 and a projected rate for 1999 of 5.6 per cent. Despite most economic indicators showing positive improvement, foreign investment remains low, impeding further growth. Of particular concern to the humanitarian community is the fact that economic reform is so far doing little to improve living conditions. According to the World Bank, 85 per cent of all Tajiks continue to live below the poverty line, including 5 per cent who are completely destitute and 12 per cent who fall into the category of the extremely poor. The dramatic decline in the level of remittances following the August 1998 crisis of the Russian economy has created further hardship and destitution. The loss of remittances combined with deteriorating terms of trade for Tajikistan's principal exports, cotton and aluminium, increases the Government's need for external financing. International funding for humanitarian operations is particularly important since such operations remain the principal means by which hundreds of thousands of Tajiks meet their basic needs.

# III. Humanitarian operations

## A. General

7. The main aim of United Nations humanitarian operations in Tajikistan is to support the country's two-year peace process through a three-pronged strategy designed to meet the basic needs of at-risk populations during the critical post-conflict period. During the past 12 months, agencies have continued to implement three types of projects: life-saving interventions, programmes aimed at stabilizing at-risk populations and projects designed to facilitate the reintegration of demobilized combatants. The United Nations humanitarian operations in Tajikistan are based on the rationale that relief assistance is essential for preventing large segments of the Tajik population from becoming further marginalized. Agencies recognize their responsibility for mitigating the effects of destitution among key social groups in order to avoid the kind of social unrest that might undermine the peace process.

8. It was hoped at the end of the last reporting period that humanitarian conditions in Tajikistan were improving. Unfortunately, standards of living have continued to decline, with unemployment now estimated at 30 per cent. Reductions in social expenditure have left widows, pensioners and other vulnerable groups with insufficient income to meet basic survival needs. Cases of families surviving on one meal every two days are rising, in particular in urban areas, where coping mechanisms are limited by unemployment and collapsing social safety nets. Ongoing transformations in the agricultural sector, including privatization, have rendered large segments of the rural population food-insecure. Although coping strategies are more diverse in rural areas, restructuring has forced farmers throughout the country into sharecropping arrangements, undermining efforts to achieve long-term self-sufficiency. Production levels remain low, especially in cereals, where yields are expected to be 15 per cent lower than last year owing to a shortage of inputs and epidemics of rust.

9. Health care remains substandard throughout the country, despite ongoing efforts to rehabilitate facilities and provide essential drugs. In rural areas, many health workers have been without payment for several months. Health professionals are seriously concerned that over-reliance on antibiotics is producing resistance to a number of contagious diseases and raises the possibility of major, uncontrollable epidemics, in particular tuberculosis and malaria. Outbreaks of water-borne diseases, including typhoid fever, continue to occur in areas with non-functioning water systems.

10. Although virtually all segments of the Tajik population, with the exception of the wealthiest, required some form of assistance during the reporting period, humanitarian needs were greatest in war-affected areas. As in previous years, the majority of programmes were concentrated in the Khatlon and Gorniy Badakshan regions, both heavily damaged during the civil war. Interventions were also conducted in areas with large concentrations of returnees, in particular in parts of Khatlon and districts around Dushanbe. The outbreak of hostilities in Leninabad Province in late October 1998 resulted in the closure of the border with Uzbekistan, forcing a dramatic increase in food prices and pushing thousands of people into food insecurity. Although a number of agencies, including the World Food Programme (WFP), launched emergency interventions, coverage in northern districts remained limited at the end of the period. Following the killing of the UNMOT personnel in the Karategin Valley in July 1998 and the withdrawal of humanitarian staff, programmes in that key region were either halted or significantly reduced. Surveys conducted after the lifting of travel restrictions in mid-June 1999 showed that serious humanitarian conditions, including hunger and ill health, existed throughout the Valley. Under the leadership of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, humanitarian agencies will be conducting a multisectoral, inter-agency technical assessment in August 1999 aimed at determining the level of need and developing a plan of action to address the most pressing humanitarian problems.

11. Despite the importance of humanitarian operations for contributing to peace and stability, donor response to both the 1998 and 1999 consolidated inter-agency appeals has been disappointing. Only 28 per cent of the 1998 Appeal for $34,640,614 was funded. Owing largely to a streamlined set of priorities, donors have responded more favourably to the 1999 appeal, pledging approximately 40 per cent of requirements by mid-June 1999. Although the improvement in donor response is welcome, United Nations agencies are concerned that of the 19 programmes for which funds were requested in the 1999 appeal, only refugee operations and ex-combatant reintegration have received adequate funding. Life-saving interventions and social support programmes remain seriously underfunded, putting hundreds of thousands of Tajiks at risk of malnutrition, epidemics and loss of livelihood.

12. Of particular concern is the lack of support for food assistance and health programmes, which aim to save lives and must receive immediate funding if social catastrophe is to be avoided in Tajikistan. In order to ensure basic humanitarian coverage for the last six months of 1999,

United Nations agencies have requested $13,510,348 for 10 priority programmes in the mid-year review of the appeal, launched in late July 1999. Tajikistan's prioritized list includes two new projects designed to facilitate the rapid demobilization of combatants.

13. Although humanitarian agencies devote the majority of their resources to life-saving and stabilization programmes in areas where conditions are stable, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations continue to support rehabilitation projects aimed at revitalizing communities and promoting self-sufficiency. In the Khatlon and Dushanbe regions, hundreds of public buildings, hospitals, clinics, schools, irrigation and electricity systems and bridges have been repaired. The United Nations large-scale shelter reconstruction programme, which has provided roofs and homes for more than 20,000 returnees during the past three years, is nearing completion, although substantial repairs are still required in the Karategin Valley, where 40 per cent of homes in certain districts remain uninhabitable.

14. Humanitarian operations in Tajikistan continue to be coordinated under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator with the assistance of the Field Coordination Unit of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Humanitarian Coordinator remains responsible for the overall direction of the humanitarian programme, including policy formulation on the key issues of security, the link between emergency aid, rehabilitation and reconstruction and resource mobilization. The Humanitarian Coordinator is also responsible for ensuring that the emergency programmes of United Nations agencies complement efforts undertaken by UNMOT, the Bretton Woods institutions and other international lending institutions. Particular attention continues to be given to ensuring a principled approach to humanitarian operations among all agencies. Programme coordination for each sector remains the responsibility of competent United Nations agencies.

## B. Security developments affecting humanitarian relief efforts

15. Volatile security conditions in the Karategin Valley have made it difficult for agencies to reach vulnerable populations in that hard-hit region. The killing of four UNMOT personnel in July 1998 near Labijar led to the temporary evacuation of non-essential United Nations personnel to Tashkent, and travel by United Nations staff in the Karategin Valley was restricted. Non-governmental organizations also withdrew their international staff, returning to the area only after an inter-agency humanitarian assessment in October 1998. Although United Nations staff were prevented from working in the Valley until the situation improved and restrictions could be lifted in mid-June 1999, non-governmental organizations continued to provide elements of a basic safety net, helping to prevent a humanitarian disaster. At the end of the reporting period, the Karategin Valley was accessible to humanitarian personnel with the exception of the south-western corner, which remained off-limits.

16. Most of the non-governmental organizations working in the Karategin Valley continue to avoid using the main highway linking the region to Dushanbe. Large stretches of the road remain outside the control of responsible authorities. In late March 1999, staff from an international non-governmental organization using the road were stopped by armed gunmen who threatened to kill all international personnel entering the area.

17. The shooting of a German Agro Action staff member in December 1998 in the Zerahshan Valley near Khujand in the Leninabad region led to the adoption of tighter security measures on road convoys organized by non-governmental organizations.

## C. Non-governmental organizations

18. More than 40 international and approximately 50 national non-governmental organizations currently provide some type of humanitarian assistance in Tajikistan. International non-governmental organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) together received more than $28 million during 1998, compared with less than $10 million received by United Nations agencies. Non-governmental organizations are active in all humanitarian sectors, although the bulk of funds are concentrated on food assistance and health programmes. As in previous years, non-governmental organization operations are based on both a geographical as well as a sectoral division of labour, helping to prevent duplication. Coordination is facilitated through sectoral committees covering food assistance, health, agriculture, human rights and security. In addition, the NGO Forum under the leadership of an elected chairperson, continues to serve as the main focal point for policy formulation.

19. During the first half of 1999, international non-governmental organizations began experiencing serious restrictions in their operational environment. These included demands for tax payments, despite their tax-free status; the introduction of fees for registration of communications

equipment; delays in granting customs clearance for humanitarian materials and licences for the distribution of certain medicines; and increasingly long waits to secure visas. Non-governmental organizations responded to those restrictions by addressing them on a case-to-case basis and seeking the intervention of the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator and funding agencies.

20. Although international non-governmental organizations received the majority of international funds earmarked for humanitarian assistance, a number of agencies were forced either to close or to shorten projects. With the majority of funding aimed at food assistance and health programmes, non-governmental organizations had difficulty in securing financing for important projects in agriculture and water and sanitation. Limited funding for humanitarian programmes in Tajikistan is expected to lead to increased rationalization among non-governmental organizations during the coming year.

## D. Relief food assistance

21. Economic hardship combined with a reduced harvest in key agricultural areas have made many segments of the population food insecure. Pockets of hunger exist throughout the country, in particular in war-affected areas, where a high percentage of households are headed by women. In a disturbing new trend, loss of remittances from male relatives working in the Russian Federation has forced numerous families across the threshold into food deficit. During the second half of 1998, poor and late harvests in the Karategin Valley and Gorniy-Badakshan stretched coping mechanisms and put thousands of Tajiks at risk of food shortages during the hunger gap between July and September. A similar phenomenon is expected in key areas during the second half of 1999. Shortages are also expected in Leninabad, where closure of the border with Uzbekistan from early November 1998 to June 1999 raised the price of grain exponentially, forcing thousands into emergency feeding programmes.

22. As in previous years, Tajikistan has been unable to produce sufficient cereals to feed its population. The deficit for the reporting period, estimated at 420,000 tons, was met through a combination of imports and humanitarian assistance. However, the total amount of humanitarian assistance did not exceed 100,000 tons, leaving approximately 320,000 tons to be found through private channels. In the absence of an import policy and a properly functioning market, cereal prices fluctuated throughout the period. By early July 1999, wheat prices had increased by more than 50 per cent over the previous year, making it difficult for impoverished families to meet daily requirements through market purchases. The number of families forced to consume only one meal every two days rose significantly during the first quarters of 1999, in particular in urban areas, where households had only limited access to alternative sources of food.

23. Food agencies, under the leadership of WFP, continued to target vulnerable population groups, providing direct assistance to war widows, single-headed households, pensioners, orphans, the disabled, the destitute, returnees and internally displaced persons. More than 1.4 million persons, approximately 24 per cent of the population, were targeted for food assistance during the reporting period, including 468,000 beneficiaries who received 30,000 tons of food support from WFP. Following the outbreak of hostilities in Leninabad, WFP opened emergency feeding programmes in the region for the first time. Although the total number of beneficiaries receiving WFP food aid dropped, the amount of food provided to recipients increased owing to reapportionment of the aid basket. Altogether, 10 agencies provided food assistance during the period to at-risk beneficiaries throughout the country. As in previous years, individual agencies took responsibility for ensuring adequate coverage in particular regions. The division of labour reduced duplication and maximized the impact of donor funding.

24. During the first three months of 1999, WFP received inadequate financial support and was forced to suspend vulnerable feeding programmes in most southern regions until April. Although programmes were re-established, WFP's funding situation remained precarious and a breakdown in its pipeline occurred. By early July, emergency food supplies were almost exhausted and WFP was faced with the prospect of once again halting its vulnerable feeding programmes. WFP reported that approximately 370,000 at-risk beneficiaries would be without food support until the agency was able to re-establish its pipeline by borrowing supplies from other WFP programmes. As a result of recent donor pledges, food supplies are due to arrive in Tajikistan during August and September 1999.

25. As part of ongoing efforts to improve food security through productive activity, WFP and other agencies continued to implement food-for-work schemes for able-bodied beneficiaries. More than 16,000 people, of whom 75 per cent were women, participated in the innovative WFP land-lease programme, whereby beneficiaries are provided with food, enabling them to cultivate land newly leased from local authorities. WFP also supported rehabilitation, training

and income-generation projects through its food-for-work programme.

26. Emergency food aid programmes were phased down in a number of areas during the first half of 1999, although the re-emergence of hunger in certain locations forced agencies to improve targeting to ensure that the most vulnerable persons continue to receive appropriate support. The aim of the phase-down, after four years of direct food aid, is to transfer able-bodied beneficiaries into food-for-work schemes and other productive activities. It is expected that by the end of 1999 more than 300,000 persons throughout the country, including 120,000 served by WFP, will be taken off emergency food aid.

27. Agencies recognized that during the transition away from emergency assistance mechanisms needed to be adopted aimed at protecting the most needy from further suffering. As part of ongoing efforts to strengthen targeting, WFP initiated a vulnerability analysis and mapping programme in May 1999 aimed at developing a countrywide profile of vulnerability. During the next 12 months, the WFP team will collate and analyse data on a wide range of social indicators, producing a vulnerability profile for each of the regions where humanitarian agencies work. The profile will help agencies to identify the most at-risk populations and to take steps to ensure that adequate food assistance reaches them in a timely fashion.

## E. Agricultural support

28. Cereal production during 1998 was lower than expected, owing to a severe winter and delayed spring planting. Although the deficit was met in part through a combination of humanitarian assistance and imports, shortages increased market prices, rendering thousands of Tajiks food-insecure. Officials are predicting that 1999 cereal production will be 15 per cent lower than that of 1998 as a result of inadequate inputs and an increase in the acreage planted with cotton. In addition, outbreaks of rust and smut and infestations of pests are expected to lower yields in key districts, including Khatlon, where 70 per cent of agricultural land is reportedly affected. The downward trend in agricultural output, evident since the outbreak of the civil war, continued during the reporting period, in particular in livestock, where production plummeted to 43 per cent lower than the 1992 baseline.

29. As part of ongoing efforts to restructure the agricultural sector, authorities have announced that 160 collective farms will be privatized during the next 18 months. Although land titles continued to be transferred during the period, the impact of privatization has been limited because of insecurity of land tenure. In addition, most private farmers receive virtually no financial or technical support. In a disturbing trend, sharecropping continues to spread in areas undergoing restructuring: farmers unable to procure inputs are being forced to borrow from large owners in return for a percentage of their crop. Officials report that more than 75 per cent of farmers are now destitute, unable to support their families through their own production.

30. Humanitarian agencies continue to support destitute farmers with seeds and tools. The WFP land-lease programme targets farmers on newly acquired land, supplying food aid for households with inadequate incomes. In the hard-hit Karategin Valley, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) operates a potato seed project, distributing high-quality seeds, fertilizer and inputs to destitute farmers in the private sector. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) complement the programme by distributing high-quality seeds to other farming constituencies in the Karategin Valley. In Khatlon, FAO supports returnees by providing seeds, fertilizers and hand tools. During the reporting period, seven humanitarian agencies were active in helping to improve agricultural output by providing seeds, tools, pesticides, machinery, food aid and training to farmers throughout the country. Unfortunately, given the 50 per cent of the Tajik population engaged in farm work, funding for agricultural projects remains poor, limiting the international community's ability to have a positive effect on reforms in this key sector.

## F. Refugee repatriation and support

31. Since 1993, when the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) began its repatriation programme, more than 50,000 Tajiks from Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and other countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States have returned to their country. In 1996, UNHCR phased down its operations, handing over its protection mandate to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In the 1997 General Agreement, UNHCR was asked to facilitate the return of ex-combatants and refugees from camps in Afghanistan and surrounding countries. UNHCR resumed field activities, focusing its operations on implementation of the Refugee Protocol in the General Agreement.

32. During the reporting period, 3,785 Tajiks returned to Tajikistan from five countries. By the end of December

1998, UNHCR had completed repatriation of refugees from Afghanistan, reintegrating a total of 39,733 Tajiks between 1993 and 1998. During the first half of 1999, repatriation from other countries proceeded smoothly, although activities for refugees currently in Kyrgyzstan, who are slated for resettlement in the Karategin Valley, were delayed by restrictions on the movement of United Nations personnel imposed as a result of the insecure conditions. The improvement of the situation brought about the lifting of those restrictions in mid-June 1999 and allowed UNHCR to accelerate that part of its programme. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the Agency expects successfully to repatriate its entire annual caseload of 5,000 refugees by the end of December 1999. As in previous periods, UNHCR was assisted with repatriation by other agencies, including the International Organization for Migration, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the State Migration Service.

33. During the second quarter of 1999, UNHCR was informed that approximately 1,600 Uzbeks were congregated in the Hoit and Tajikibad districts of the Karategin Valley. Owing to security restrictions, the Agency was unable to survey the population or to provide emergency assistance. In mid-July, following the lifting of those restrictions, UNHCR, accompanied by staff of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, undertook a mission, assessing humanitarian conditions and conducting preliminary interviews with members of the community. Following the mission, the Agency initiated discussions with the Government of Tajikistan regarding the process that would be used to determine the refugee status of this caseload.

34. UNHCR continued to provide a full integration package for returnees, including shelter and food assistance allocated by WFP. During the reporting period, UNHCR financed the construction of 1,750 shelters for more than 1,900 beneficiaries out of the 2,000 recommended in a 1998 survey. The remaining 250 shelters, which will be constructed by non-governmental organizations, will be completed by the end of 1999. UNHCR continued to support the WFP land-lease programme, which benefited 2,000 returnee households. Working through other agencies, UNHCR also supported the rehabilitation of health, water and educational facilities. In communities where refugees have been resettled for longer periods, UNHCR shifted its focus in early 1999 to micro-enterprise activities in order to increase food security and family income. Given the significant decrease in its caseload, the agency expects to phase down its operations during 2000.

## G. Health

35. The health care system in Tajikistan remains in serious crisis. Although humanitarian agencies have continued to rehabilitate hospitals and clinics, virtually no progress has been made in improving case management, promoting health sector reform or updating medical equipment. Funding for health care remains grossly inadequate, with average per capita expenditure having plummeted from $250 in 1990 to approximately $2 in 1999. The loss during the last six years of more than 17 per cent of the country's doctors and 21 per cent of its nurses has caused major staff shortages and led to a lowering of professional standards. Non-payment of salaries remains a major impediment to reform, in particular in hard-hit rural areas where local councils receive little or no financial support from the central Government.

36. Access to medical care is becoming increasingly difficult for the country's impoverished population. Although health care is officially free, informal charges are levied at all stages of the system. Such charges, often equivalent to a monthly wage packet for routine visits, have effectively put adequate care outside the reach of the majority of the population. Simple hospital procedures, for example, a normal childbirth, which costs nearly 30 per cent of the average annual wage, are bankrupting families. Patients who can not afford informal charges are regularly denied medical care.

37. According to official statistics, the health status of the population improved slightly during the reporting period. Maternal and infant mortality rates dropped from 82.3 per 100,000 live births to 65.5 per 100,000 and from 30.4 per 1,000 to 27.6 per 1,000, respectively. Despite those improvements, key segments of the population suffer disproportionately from poor health, women in particular. The number of unsupervised home births has increased to nearly 30 per cent of all births and in certain rural areas to more than 75 per cent. Birth intervals average less than two years for most women and more than 40 per cent of all pregnant women are anaemic. The number of low-birth-weight babies has increased to more than 17 per cent of all live births. Incidents of sexually transmitted disease have also increased, with syphilis prevalence estimated at 16.3 per 100,000, up from 1.6 per 100,000 in 1991. It is estimated that between 40 and 50 per cent of the adult female population may be suffering from some form of sexually transmitted disease.

38. The health status of children is also a matter of serious concern. A recent nutritional study in the Khatlon area, home to large numbers of returnees, showed unacceptably high

levels of stunting, a strong indicator of chronic malnutrition. Drug abuse continues to grow, especially among young adults and the unemployed. Officials estimate that in Dushanbe alone more than 20,000 persons have become addicted to heroin. Despite a 14-fold increase in addiction, attendance at treatment centres remains limited.

39. Of the communicable diseases, tuberculosis, malaria and typhoid fever were the most prevalent during the reporting period. Of particular concern is the apparent rise in cases of drug-resistant tuberculosis as a result of failure to complete expensive courses of treatment. Although the Government continues to support a national tuberculosis control programme, implementation has stalled owing to a severe shortage of anti-tuberculosis drugs.

40. In a disturbing trend, several areas that were malaria-free before the civil war have become endemic, putting thousands of Tajiks at risk each year. Although the total number of new cases of malaria decreased by 30 per cent during the period, outbreaks are expected during the summer season in Kurgan-Tyube and other low-lying flood plains. During the first half of 1999, at least six outbreaks of typhus occurred, including one in Kulyab in early July 1999 that resulted in 14 deaths.

41. Immunization rates were high during the reporting period, although coverage was more limited in areas suffering persistent insecurity. During 1998, coverage for BCG, the anti-tuberculosis vaccine, was 98 per cent for children between zero and one. Coverage for the diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine was 94 per cent, for poliomyelitis 95 per cent and for measles 94 per cent. Owing to difficulties in maintaining the cold chain, coverage rates dropped during the first quarters of 1999. Although BCG and measles coverage continued to be high, at 98 per cent, both DPT and polio dropped to 79 per cent. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continued to support the Ministry of Health through the provision of vaccines and training. One "mopping-up" campaign for poliomyelitis was conducted in October and November 1998.

42. As in previous years, most international assistance focused on provision of essential drugs and rehabilitation of destroyed or dilapidated buildings. Several agencies, including WHO and UNICEF, were involved in the control of epidemic diseases. The United Nations Population Fund continued its support to the reproductive health sector through technical assistance, equipment and contraceptives. Several agencies also supported health education, although communities affected by insecurity received only minimal support. Despite the alarming state of mental health facilities, only one non-governmental organization was active in the area.

43. Humanitarian agencies continued to debate the merits of providing free medicines. In some communities, humanitarian agencies account for 40 per cent of all drug supplies. Without that assistance, morbidity and mortality rates would almost certainly be higher. Concerned about sustainability, agencies are increasingly adopting more cost-recovery schemes aimed at lessening dependency on international assistance. It is expected that that trend will continue during the second half of 1999.

## H. Water and sanitation

44. Central water systems continued to deteriorate during the period, increasing the level of secondary contamination and putting large segments of people at risk of developing diarrhoeal diseases. The situation was particularly acute in rural areas, where many local authorities were prevented from maintaining piped water systems by near bankruptcy. Less than 40 per cent of rural communities currently have functioning water systems, forcing hundreds of thousands of Tajiks to use unprotected sources. A recent survey found that 60-65 per cent of rural schools relied on unsafe water sources, raising serious questions about the short- and medium-term health status of children. Another survey found that 17.5 per cent of all drinking water samples failed to meet bacteriological standards, which is of particular concern to public health professionals.

45. Less than 17 per cent of Tajikistan's population has access to a centralized sewerage system, while in rural areas as little as 2 per cent of the population uses piped facilities. Despite efforts by international agencies to improve and build basic facilities, pit and pumped latrines remain in poor condition. A recent survey in southern Tajikistan, for example, found that 60-94 per cent of school latrines required repair.

46. During the reporting period, agencies continued to rehabilitate water systems. The UNDP/UNOPS two-year renovation project of Kulyab's sewerage system entered its second phase. That major initiative, which involves rehabilitation of the city's piped system, water channels and purification plant, will be completed in August 1999. In addition to bringing safe water to more than 65,000 beneficiaries, the overhaul will also reduce outbreaks of malaria and typhus in this endemic area.

47. UNICEF and non-governmental organizations also continue to repair handpumps and to provide sand filters,

helping communities to curb the spread of water-borne diseases. As part of ongoing efforts to improve hygiene awareness, UNICEF has developed a primary school textbook, published in both Russian and Tajik, for incorporation into the state curriculum. UNICEF plans to distribute additional booklets, introduced into Khatlon primary schools in October 1998, to schools throughout the country in time for the 1999 school year. Although some agencies are active in hygiene training and latrine construction, the area remains one of the most poorly funded. Substantial donor support is needed in order to combat the root causes of water-borne diseases by improving access to safe drinking water.

## I. Education

48. The downward trend in school enrolment persisted during the reporting period, in particular in rural areas, where generalized destitution forced many children into work. Continuing a trend begun after the civil war, enrolment of girls is declining at a faster rate than that of boys. In areas where traditional values have re-emerged, girls are being encouraged to leave school at the end of primary classes. Officials estimate that approximately 20 per cent of boys and 25 per cent of girls do not currently attend school.

49. Owing to lack of resources, conditions inside schools have continued to deteriorate during the past 12 months. Although UNICEF was able to provide education kits benefiting 20,000 students, severe shortages of textbooks and other materials affected schools throughout the country. Officials report that the majority of schools in the hard-hit Karategin Valley have no teaching materials and are forced to rely on verbal methods of learning. In many areas, schools were closed during the winter months owing to lack of heating. As in previous years, teachers receive only minimal salaries and in a number of districts have not been paid for several months.

50. As part of a major initiative to improve the quality and quantity of educational materials, UNICEF will be printing nine textbooks to be used for children in grades 1-4. By the end of the reporting period, UNICEF had printed two of the nine textbooks. In the coming months, UNICEF plans on distributing enough copies to cover 30-35 per cent of needs for this age group.

51. Altogether, eight agencies, including WFP, continued their work in the sector during the period, providing materials, training and school feeding programmes. Despite their efforts, generalized impoverishment combined with the lack of government funding made progress negligible. If underfunding continues, Tajikistan is likely to be one of the first countries where widespread illiteracy re-emerges after having been virtually eliminated.

## J. Child protection

52. Although no official statistics exist, authorities estimate that the number of street children in Tajikistan's main cities probably declined during the reporting period. With unemployment near 30 per cent, however, thousands of children continue to act as breadwinners for destitute families. Although some children are drawn into criminal activities, most earn money as porters, cleaners and food workers. Incidents of abandonment, confined mostly to members of the Russian minority, who have only limited social networks, are reportedly on the rise. As in previous years, the juvenile justice system remained in crisis. Children continued to be incarcerated with adults. In violation of Tajikistan's own laws, no juvenile courts are sitting at present.

53. In a positive development, Tajikistan, which signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (resolution 44/25, annex) immediately after independence in 1991, submitted a report to the United Nations outlining the steps it had taken in pursuance of the Convention. The report concluded that extreme poverty threatened the basic rights of Tajik children to education, health care and food. It also warned that increasing numbers of children had no legal status because of the failure of parents to register births.

54. Although a few agencies continue to work in the sector, providing assistance to street children and orphans, United Nations agencies recognize that more substantial interventions are necessary in order to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Under the leadership of UNICEF, United Nations agencies intend to focus on protection issues in the coming months. Plans are being prepared to emulate some of the innovative work undertaken by UNHCR in Tajikistan in the field of child protection. During the reporting period, UNHCR continued its special literacy programmes aimed at non-reading children and its training in humanitarian and human rights law for military personnel and members of the police and judicial systems.

## K. Rehabilitation

55. By the end of the reporting period, UNDP/UNOPS had implemented more than 200 rehabilitation projects in war-

affected areas throughout the country. Working in 21 districts and directly benefiting more than 1.7 million people, UNDP/UNOPS aims to rehabilitate infrastructure, promote self-sufficiency and reinvigorate civil society on the basis of priorities set by communities. During two years of programme implementation, 31 schools, 70 medical facilities, 17 water systems and 9 irrigation pump stations have been rehabilitated. Four women's centres have been established, 4 bridges reconstructed and 20 electricity supply systems rehabilitated. In addition, more than 15,000 hectares have been put into production and 176 kilometres of irrigation channels cleaned. A total of 7,000 temporary and 500 permanent jobs have been created, often in areas suffering high rates of unemployment.

56. Committed to helping ex-combatants integrate into society, UNDP/UNOPS developed a special programme of labour-intensive projects for implementation in areas with high concentrations of former fighters, including the Karategin Valley. Following the killing of the four UNMOT staff, the programme was suspended. With the lifting of restrictions on United Nations personnel in mid-June, UNDP/UNOPS was able to reopen its office in Garm and to begin immediate implementation of more than 50 projects in four Karategin districts. Darband was the only area where UNDP/UNOPS was unable to restart its programme because of persistent insecurity.

57. Other agencies continue to support rehabilitation, including WFP, which uses its food-for-work programme to repair roads and bridges, clean canals and refurbish community buildings in war-affected areas. Although the massive shelter programme for the Khatlon region was nearly complete at the beginning of the period, several non-governmental organizations continue to construct homes and to provide roofs for returnees and internally displaced persons. Owing to the insecurity, only limited rebuilding has occurred in the Karategin Valley, despite widespread destruction during the civil war. Plans are under way to launch a substantial rebuilding programme in the Valley, in particular in Tavildara, where an estimated 40 per cent of houses are either fully or partially destroyed.

## IV. Assistance provided by Member States

58. In addition to the activities listed above, Member States have provided the following information on assistance to Tajikistan pursuant to resolution 53/1 K.

59. In 1998, the Government of Finland contributed 4 million markkaa (FIM) for assistance programmes to Tajikistan. In 1999, Finland again contributed FIM 4 million for assistance to Tajikistan, of which FIM 2 million was administered through UNICEF and FIM 2 million through the Finnish Red Cross and ICRC.

60. In 1998, the Government of Germany contributed 300,000 deutsche mark (DM) to food security programmes, DM 1,244,000 to food-for-work programmes, DM 1,350,000 for food deliveries channelled through the German relief organization World Hunger and DM 517,445 to humanitarian emergency aid. In 1999, the Government of Germany provided DM 1,800,000 to Food Security Programmes, DM 1,033,000 to food-for-work programmes, DM 540,000 channelled through UNICEF for health measures and DM 81,000 for humanitarian mine-sweeping.

61. The Government of India provided medicines valued at 4.2 million Indian rupees (Rs) in 1992 and at Rs 5 million in 1995. In 1998, the Government assisted Tajikistan with medicines and baby food in the amount of Rs 7.5 million.

62. The United States of America provided $25,000 for emergency relief activities for disaster victims of floods in Tajikistan in 1998.

## V. Concluding observations

63. Despite progress in both the peace process and economic reform and improvements in security, significant humanitarian needs continue to exist throughout Tajikistan. Two years after the end of the civil war, hundreds of thousands of Tajiks continue to rely on international assistance to meet their basic needs. Although agencies providing emergency aid actively promote self-sufficiency, the level of need is so great that it would be premature at the present stage to halt relief assistance.

64. As part of ongoing efforts to support the peace process, the United Nations envisages the need to maintain humanitarian operations until the 1997 General Agreement is fully implemented. After parliamentary elections, tentatively scheduled for the first half of 2000, the United Nations would re-evaluate the humanitarian assistance activities with a view to addressing longer-term developmental issues. In the meantime, humanitarian programmes will continue to serve as a bridge, helping at-risk populations to meet their basic needs while conditions are being laid for the transition to democracy and a market economy. The strong commitment of United Nations agencies to participatory approaches would also continue in

recognition that Tajikistan's future development depends upon the ability of communities, rather than state structures, to provide essential services and sustain populations.

65. In certain areas where conditions are stable, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations are engaged in rehabilitation projects aimed at revitalizing communities and promoting self-sufficiency. That process is expected to continue during the coming year, helping to create a sustainable environment for the country's future development.

66. As in previous periods, the bulk of international resources for Tajikistan are provided through multilateral lending institutions. In comparison, the amount of funding available for relief assistance remains limited. Given this disparity, ensuring that humanitarian programmes are linked to the broader aims of the funding institutions remains an ongoing concern of United Nations agencies. The link between the United Nations and lending institutions is already strong, with two institutions using United Nations agencies as implementing partners. Special attention will continue to be given to the humanitarian implications of adjustment programmes during the United Nations dialogue with those important institutions.

67. The major challenge facing Tajikistan is full implementation of the General Agreement under conditions of social stability. The most serious obstacle to implementation continues to be the impoverishment and marginalization of key social constituencies. Although some parts of the economy are slowly regenerating, unfavourable terms of trade, loss of remittances and lack of foreign investment hinder full recovery. Until the economy is able to support the Tajik population and the peace process has been fully consolidated, humanitarian operations will remain a critical factor in ensuring stability in Tajikistan.